

WE CLAIM:

1. A computer-implemented method for identifying metadata about a resource identified by a first identifier, the method comprising:  
issuing a request to get a rendition of the resource identified by the first identifier;  
parsing a response document received in response to the issued request;  
and  
if the response document includes an indication that the metadata exists within a resource identified by a second identifier, retrieving the metadata from the other resource identified by the second identifier.
2. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the response document comprises an XML document and the indication comprises an XML processing instruction.
3. The computer-implemented method of claim 2, wherein the identifier comprises a Universal Resource Identifier.
4. The computer-implemented method of claim 2, wherein the indication further comprises an attribute identifying an "alternate" relation.
5. The computer-implemented method of claim 2, wherein the indication further comprises the second identifier.
6. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein the response document comprises an HTML document and the indication comprises a LINK tag.
7. The computer-implemented method of claim 6, wherein the LINK tag further comprises an attribute identifying an expected response type of text/xml.

8. The computer-implemented method of claim 6, wherein the LINK tag further comprises an attribute identifying an "alternate" relation.

9. The computer-implemented method of claim 6, wherein the LINK tag further comprises the second identifier.

10. The computer-implemented method of claim 1, wherein retrieving the metadata from the other location occurs automatically and without further user interaction.

11. A computer-readable medium encoded with a data structure, comprising a discovery document including metadata about a resource stored at a first location identified by a first identifier, the discovery document being stored at a second location identified by a second identifier, the discovery document further including at least one typed link indicating the existence of further metadata about the resource.

12. The computer-readable medium of claim 11, wherein the typed link indicates the existence of a second discovery document and a location of the second discovery document.

13. The computer-readable medium of claim 11, wherein the typed link indicates a link to a Web-based service.

14. The computer-readable medium of claim 13, wherein another typed link indicates a link to a description of the Web-based service.

15. The computer-readable medium of claim 11, wherein the typed link indicates a link to an XML schema.

16. The computer-readable medium of claim 11, wherein the identifier comprises a Universal Resource Identifier.

17. A computer-readable medium encoded with a data structure, comprising a response document issued in response to a request for a resource, the response document including an indication that a document exists including metadata about the resource.

18. The computer-readable medium of claim 18, wherein the response document is an HTML document and the indication comprises a LINK tag.

19. The computer-readable medium of claim 18, wherein the response document is an XML document and the indication comprises an XML stylesheet processing instruction.

20. A system for communicating data over a network, the system comprising:  
a server computer including a resource;  
a client computer configured to issue a request for the resource and to receive information in response to the request; and  
a response document based on the resource, generated by the server, and including an indication of the existence of a discovery document, the discovery document including metadata about the resource,  
wherein the client computer receives the response document including the indication of the discovery document.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein the response document comprises an XML document and the indication of the existence of the discovery document comprises an XML stylesheet processing instruction.

22. The system of claim 20, wherein the response document comprises an HTML document and the indication of the existence of the discovery document comprises a LINK tag.